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Department of

Early Education and Care

2012 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE



The accomplishments and activities described in the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's FY2012 Annual Report to the Legislature delineates activities from February 2011 – February 2012 and also summarizes the Department's vision and plans for the coming years.

Building a Comprehensive Early Education and Care System

A key goal of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care is to ensure all children **enter school ready to succeed** and to eliminate school readiness gaps between high needs children and their more advantaged peers. The latest science shows that these **early experiences actually build the architecture of the developing brain**. Each sequential step lays the groundwork for the next set of skills – like reading and math—and **a lifetime of learning, success and productive, responsible citizenship**.

Compelling evidence shows that one effective solution for **reducing the achievement gap** and strengthening the broader range of children's educational experiences is through **high-quality early learning and development programs**. This year, EEC has worked to progress toward building the nation's most **effective system** of high-quality comprehensive early learning and development, within a **birth to age 20 continuum**.

Key Highlights of FY2012

CHILD OUTCOMES

Access to Early Education and Care: funded early education and care for 52,000 children daily and used ARRA funds to provide additional programming for special populations of children at risk for poor educational outcomes.

Early Childhood Information System – Access to Parental Consent Forms at a Variety of Access Points: CFCE piloted the form and will provide input on the draft to be used as part of the ECIS; the form is a tool that allows for enhanced capacity to identify and provide targeted resources and referrals to families.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Screening Tool – Access to Children Beyond Formal Child Care Settings: piloted the use of the ASQ screening tool in 15 CFCE programs with the goal of integrating in CFCE model across the state as a way to talk with parents about child development and link them to local resources.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R): moved forward with a reform effort of the CCR&R System resulting in a new 2013 model.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge: secured \$50M in funding, over 4 years, to allow Massachusetts to continue strengthening our current system of early education and care.

Key Highlights of FY2012

PROGRAM QUALITY

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): launched an on-line system for programs to manage QRIS participation, implemented FY2011/12 grants and plans to evaluate the QRIS Standards and take efforts to move toward universal participation.

Redefining Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK): EEC's Board voted to implement modifications to the UPK program in FY2013, allowing for the expansion of the program and alignment with QRIS.

Comprehensive Child Data System: launched the work of the new IT Unified system, which will streamline business processes, improve child/family data and management of financial assistance.

Alignment of Quality with a Rate Reform Initiative: planned for the analysis of the current cost of providing quality, whole child education reimbursement in the mixed system.

TEACHER QUALITY

Availability of On-line Resources: increased access to a myriad of opportunities through the use of on-line resources, including a series of on-line courses on the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences, the Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers, the Core Competencies and Early Literacy.

Science Informs the Work

As noted by Dr. Jack Shonkoff at the Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, a source of counsel to state educational leaders in Massachusetts, **there is a critical link between children's experiences in their first five years of life and eventual success in school.** Early adversity in the form of "toxic stress" greatly impedes the brain from developing the necessary circuitry to fully engage in learning¹.

EEC recognizes the vital importance of its work to the future social and economic wellbeing of the Commonwealth—as today's children will become tomorrow's citizens, workers and parents. If we invest wisely today, utilizing all of what we know from science and best practice, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship.

¹ Harvard University Center for the Developing Child. (n.d.). Brain hero [web video].



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**Department of
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